

the foundation on which the Greeks erected their magnificent superstructure, and from the Greeks the Romans took their lesson. At Byzantium, Roman architecture, "with a difference," was practised, and the growth of the wonderful cathedrals of the middle ages out of Byzantine germs may be examined in every stage of progress.

Again; without in any way denying the baneful influence of a bad system and want of proper education on architecture, or ceasing to regret the want of proper progress, something is nevertheless being done, and an architecture, such as it may be, is being produced among us that, like the path up the mountain side, which to those upon it spreads hither and thither, and is scarcely to be traced, will be seen clear and well defined when viewed from a distance. Our labourers' model cottages, railroad stations, viaducts, lunatic asylums, prisons, work-houses, baths, residences, banks, are for the most part genuine expressions of the wants and views of the day,—the result of progressive accumulations of experience. The principle of real beauty, it is true, is but slightly developed in these, and thus they faithfully tell the feeling of the age, but here nevertheless is a distinctive frame-work which art may clothe, and consecrate to our century. Anxiously do we look to have this done, and to find in our artists a higher aim than that of copying as correctly as possible: "Freedom and hope are the first true principles of greatness in art, as in every thing else; and servility, and despair of doing better than has been done before, must cramp the noblest genius and hide the highest aim."

Our readers will find both pleasure and profit in the perusal of Mr. Fergusson's powerful and interesting work.

#### THE GERMAN SCHOOL OF PAINTING.

THE reproduction of the German theory on the subject of the study of antiquity in your columns is a topic so important to the future welfare of art, that nothing less than a full investigation of its claims to public support ought to be satisfactory to those who adopt it. It is, therefore, without apology that I venture to address you again, not so much to contradict as to qualify the statements upon which that theory is based.

Maisane de Stael, in her "Germany," very truly states that the German dominion is "the air." No German can eat, or drink, or sleep, without a theory. That enthusiastic people has ever been remarkable for brilliancy of imagination and depth of intellect, but not for soundness of judgment. It was, therefore, natural at a time when the revival of art at Düsseldorf and Munich took place, that it should be accompanied by peculiar notions, and a new theory of the beautiful. The theory was shortly, as stated by your correspondent, "An Artist," much to the following effect, viz., that the character which forms the strength of nations, as well as of individuals, is a gradual and natural development of the powers of man, which ought to be suffered to work out its own results, free from the control of systems and the bondage of schools. It was attempted to establish this theory from the history of art in Italy, and the sublime genius of the early poets and painters was favourably contrasted with that of later schools for this purpose. The cause of a decline and fall so grievous and lamentable was urged to be the prevalence of classical taste, and the introduction of Greek statues. It appears to me, I own, at first sight, that the cause alleged is quite insufficient to produce so vast a result. One German author, indeed, refines so far as to state that art obtained its greatest perfection in what is usually termed the middle manner of Raffaele. His first style is (it is stated) a cold copy of his master, Perugino. His second shows that natural development which

great powers of mind acquire by constant exercise. His third style exhibits seeds of decay and corruption. The very arabesques of the Vatican, taken as they are, in great measure, from the antique, it is contended show a predisposition to study the "outward form"—the "external decoration"—rather than the spiritual meaning or inward significance, conveyed by the work of art to the spectator's mind. There is a vast gulf, we see, between the picture of "The Transfiguration" and "The Entombment of Christ" in the Borghese Gallery. A greater knowledge of effect and colour have in the former case been purchased by the sacrifice of higher qualities—dignity and pathos.\* Granting the facts to be as stated, the unfairness of attributing the result to any one cause is manifest. A correct knowledge of the life of Raffaele, and of the social state of Italy at the time, are the best means of enabling us to ascertain the causes of the decay of art; but further, the facts are disputed. In many points the latter works of Raffaele, and particularly "The Transfiguration," are his greatest performances; and if not in all points the same, it only seems to prove what I have before advanced, that as each age in man has its appropriate employments and amusements, so each age in the life of nations has its peculiar phases of character, and its peculiar developments of art. But what have been, let me ask, the practical results of this theory? To no mind did these views present themselves with greater force than to the genius of a man like Overbeck. Glowing with an ardent affection for the saints and martyrs of Fra Angelico, he was conscious (according to his theory) that it was only by throwing himself as far as lay in his power into the whole system pursued by the early painters that he could paint as they paint. His first step, therefore, was to change his religion, and renounce the idea of painting any but religious pictures. He felt the necessity of a definite course of training, and (if I may so express it) of breathing a certain atmosphere. He betook himself to Rome, where he lives like a recluse: and strangers, who annually go as pilgrims to the city of the seven hills, bear testimony to the sincerity of his piety and the simplicity of his life.

And yet the result is certainly unsatisfactory; least of all is it a style easy and natural. Setting out, as I have before remarked, with a supercilious contempt of classical antiquity, it has ended in a slavish adherence and imitation of Christian antiquity. It is a style which may be very attractive to enthusiastic men of peculiar religious views, but it does not and cannot attract the full sympathies of the age in which we live.

The general weakness of the argument which I have, I hope, fairly stated, must be apparent to most intelligent minds. It is as if a man, admiring the innocence of childhood and the vigour of youth, were to attempt to give the airs and graces of a boy to a prudent sexagenarian! or it is as if a tutor and guardian, seeing the peculiar attractiveness of an infant, were to say to his child, "You shall never learn Latin or Greek, because it will spoil the freshness of your taste. You at least shall remain a specimen of the olden time; and blissful ignorance shall be the best substitute for classical attainments." Alas, Sir, the vices and follies and foibles of the age in which we live are many, but such as they are we must try to throw ourselves into it, and educate our children accordingly. We should take advantage of every light which experience or nature can give; avoiding all exclusive systems, and distrustful of ourselves on the one hand lest with the acquirement of knowledge we lose vigour and originality of thought, and on the other, lest, by too great a confidence in our own attainments, we despise the results of experience. Had your correspondent, "An Artist," advocated the exclusive study of antiquity to the disparagement of nature, I should have argued at least as keenly in favour of nature as I now do in favour of the old masters. Over-education, it must be admitted, is a fault in the present day; but over-education is seldom felt

except in the case of a naturally weak mind. Because the study of antiquity leads to mistakes—because, for instance (as your correspondent remarks), the study of Wilkie or Rembrandt leads to an inability to appreciate the works of Leonardo or Raffaele,—is that, let me ask, a good reason for abandoning the study of antiquity altogether? Truly not so: but the moral to be drawn from such failure is rather this—that it is desirable each should only study so far as the natural strength of his capacity will enable him to go. The really great man may, indeed, take "all knowledge for his province," as did Bacon. To the ordinary run of mankind, it will be sufficient to attempt a certain branch of the arts, and in that to attain proficiency. Those who are wedded to any exclusive system can appeal to experience neither with pleasure nor profit, but those who, to minds already enlightened, add a keen love of nature and truth, it will be found that even faulty works of art may present much that is valuable in the way of instruction. It is, indeed, the characteristic of true critical skill to discover beauties as well as to find faults.

Again, the application of the German theory to literature, appears to be, at the least, as defective as its application to art. Nor is this to be wondered at. Broad principles which commend or reject the study of experience, are universally true or false, and admit of no real modification. It may, indeed, be true that some of the early poets of Italy possess a purity of thought which is lost by the taint which civilization and increasing numbers bring with them. It may be true that Tasso was a poet vastly inferior to Dante. This, however, I contend may be traced to the difference of character in the two men, rather than to any sinister influence on the mind of the former from classical associations. Dante, himself, by the prominence which he gives to the character of Virgil, in his immortal song, unquestionably advocates the study of classic authors, and when "An Artist" finds fault with the selection of Pagan imagery to illustrate a Christian story, he should remember that in doing so he blames not merely this age or that—but that system of ecclesiastical government, but the whole practice of the middle ages. "Our ancestors," remarks Mrs. Jameson, in her excellent preface to her late work, were not particular in drawing that strong line of demarcation between the classical, Jewish, and Christian periods of history that we do. They only saw Christendom everywhere, and regarded the past only in relation to Christianity." Hence we find Solon, Apollonius, Plutarch, Plato, and Sophocles introduced into sacred subjects (one of which Mrs. J. instances at length), holding scrolls on which are inscribed passages from their works, interpreted (mystically) into allusions to the coming of Christ, and pictures of the nativity are to be found where the Sibyls are dancing hand in hand round the cradle of the Saviour. The seeming profanity of such allusions is certainly explained away when we understand it as interpreted to include the comprehension of the whole universe, in a truly Catholic sense, within the pale of Christianity. And so, too, our own Milton—

"Thus Jove on Juno smil'd."

Speaking of Adam and Eve, and of Milton, Mr. Editor, I would remark that his is a case, where experience aided genius. He not only imitated, but surpassed the poets of Italy, and his devotion to classical studies is well attested by the unrivalled excellence of his Latin versification. Pope, Dryden, Addison, were all accomplished scholars, of which their works bear ample testimony, and he is a bold man who can venture to say that they would have been, had they thrown experience overboard, and relied on the study of human nature. The two celebrated statues, Tam'o Shanter and Souter Johnny, were specimens of what nature can teach a man when he studies her without light or knowledge. Instead of following the golden rule of taking the best things from the best men, the uneducated artist, trusting to impulse rather than to reason, attempts a matter of fact imitation of what is nearest to his hand. Those who come to nature without principles to guide them in looking at her, become servile imitators or vile copyists, but the man who comes to nature

\* Two good specimens of the later and middle manner of Raffaele, which may be familiar to your English readers, are the "Madonna delle Candelare," purchased by Mr. Monro out of the Lauro Gallery, a late work of the master, and the St. Catherine in the National Gallery.